



Exercise 4.6

Critiquing Brochures



Brochures are useful and flexible communication tools for any agency. Since they are relatively easy to produce, everyone makes them. This means you can probably find a range of brochures to use in this exercise—from very good examples to rather poor examples. Examples of both types of brochures can be helpful as the participants review the communication guidelines you have introduced throughout this training.

It may be natural for participants to focus on the graphic design, but try to steer the discussion to a review of the communication principles you have covered in this training. Before the training, adapt *Worksheet 1: Brochure Critique* to fit your training program. For example, if you don't plan to cover misconceptions or will introduce procedural knowledge later, remove these items from the worksheet.

Objectives: Participants will be able to do the following:

1. Identify appropriate and inappropriate language in brochures.
2. Identify examples of and missed opportunities for connecting to audience concerns.
3. Identify where analogies and examples are used to make concepts clear.

Materials:

Worksheet 1: Brochure Critique, one per person
Copies of at least four different brochures, so each person has one of each
Fact Sheet 4.1: Communication Basics
Fact Sheet 4.3: The Language of Conservation
Fact Sheet 4.4: The Power of Information
Fact Sheet 4.7: Addressing Misconceptions about Wildland-Urban Interface Issues
Presentations 4.1 and 4.2

Time: 45 minutes

1. Begin by explaining some guidelines for effective communication. You can review information from **Fact Sheets 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.7** as appropriate. **Presentations 4.1 and 4.2** may also be useful.
2. Ask the group what makes a brochure effective. For each item it may be helpful to ask the group to provide a tip of what should be done and what should not be done. Following are several examples.

Use plain language.

- Don't use technical jargon; use common, understandable words.

- Don't speak in the nebulous, ambiguous third person; personalize the text by using "you" and making the information relevant.

Plan an attractive design.

- Don't pack the page full; have white space and illustrations.
- Use illustrations that can represent anyone in the audience and also be meaningful for the region.

Use concrete examples.

- Explain that others are doing this; don't avoid specifics.

Use appropriate emotion and concerns.

- Use concerns that residents have about environmental quality, health, safety, and family; don't ignore conflicting values.
- Provide factual information; don't threaten people with fear-inducing claims about danger.
- Encourage people to be responsible; don't push so they feel guilty for not taking action.

Deal with misconceptions.

- Acknowledge other ways of looking at the problem.
3. Distribute copies of the brochures and worksheet to small groups of the participants and ask them to review each brochure and note good and bad examples on the worksheet. If you have enough brochures or make copies of each brochure, you can encourage participants to write on them. If you don't have enough brochures for each person to get a copy, give one to each small group so that everyone may be familiar with it. Let every group know which brochure it will report on.
 4. Facilitate a report and discussion of the good and not-so-good strategies the brochures use. It is likely that the discussion will raise different views on the same tip. It is true that some of these characteristics are subjective (what is enough white space? is this enough or too much?). It can be frustrating for participants if every critique results in "some people think this, some people think that." Emphasize those examples that are clearly good or bad. Emphasize that the final arbiter of these discussions should be the intended audience of the brochure, not resource professionals such as themselves. Explain that the observations that you are discussing represent the kinds of questions to pilot test with the real audience. If they are equally ambivalent, the brochure is not bad, but may not be great, either.

Optional: If you are running out of time, assign each group just one or two items (lines) from the worksheet.

Summary

Brochures represent important communication tools. Because they embody many of the communication techniques covered in this module, an insightful discussion about them can be quite useful in your training workshop.



Worksheet 1: Brochure Critique

For each of the brochures, note examples of what is done well and where opportunities were missed.

| Item | Brochure 1 | Brochure 2 | Brochure 3 | Brochure 4 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| How does the brochure speak to the audience? What feelings does it evoke for that audience? | | | | |
| Does the brochure use technical jargon? | | | | |
| What attitudes might the audience hold about this topic, and how are those acknowledged in the brochure? | | | | |
| What misconceptions might the audience already hold about this topic, and how does the brochure acknowledge and try to overcome them? | | | | |
| How does the brochure engage readers to solve the problem for themselves? | | | | |
| Where does the brochure provide specific procedural information that will help the reader do something about the problem? | | | | |
| Does the brochure imply a threat or generate fear? If so, is the reader given concrete and practical steps to reduce the threat? | | | | |
| What makes the brochure attractive to pick up and interesting to read? Is it easy to know which section to read next? | | | | |
| Does the brochure provide enough background information for readers to understand what and why? | | | | |